

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

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### CHAPTER XX.

IT was like a statue coming to life—a carven lump of marble suddenly kindling into human warmth and colour. Madge could at any moment as soon have pictured Old Cuddaw himself, descending from his height, walking up the garden-path and graciously bidding her "good morning," as Miss Shore so far condescending. Yet that was what happened. And not only did the young lady condescend to the greeting of common life, but she absolutely displayed for Madge's inspection the water-colour drawing on which she had been so long occupied, asking for her opinion on it.

It was a spirited sketch. Miss Shore had caught the purple tone of the landscape together with the golden glow of summer sunlight. If it had been drawn by another hand, Madge would have gone into raptures over it.

"It is pretty," was all she said by way of praise. "I will, if you will allow me, see how it looks against the wall hangings of my room."

These wall hangings of the little room—an octagon opening off the inner hall—were of chrome silk. The landscape, hung sideways to the light, was strikingly effective.

"I suppose," said Madge, turning to Miss Shore, who held the sketch in its place, "I must give up the idea of more than one other, the same size. You are not quick with your brush."

She looked up at the girl's face and then for the first time noted the change that

one day had wrought. Ten years seemed to be effaced from it, the marmoreal hardness of the features had disappeared, a faint flush of colour tinged the white cheeks, the grey eyes were shining. Madge's long look no doubt seemed to repeat the remark she had made as to Miss Shore's artistic capabilities.

"I am not always so slow," she replied, "but I was fit for nothing when I came here first."

"Fit for nothing!" repeated Madge, still eyeing the girl keenly.

"Yes. I was weak—I was ill. I could not eat—I could not sleep, naturally I could not paint."

Madge felt inclined to ask whether a certain paragraph in the preceding day's paper had not had something to do with the young lady's increased power of eating and sleeping, but restrained herself.

"I shall be glad to have a companion picture to this," she said. "A sketch of the valley if you will undertake it."

And then she looked and looked at her again, saying to herself: "A statue coming to life—marble glowing into flesh and blood—that's what it is."

But not alone in Miss Shore's face and figure was a change perceptible; Madge's maid in her morning attendance, reported another wonder—that the looking-glasses in Miss Shore's room had been uncovered and appeared to be in use, and that the young lady had frequently of late asked her advice on the matter of hair-dressing, and appeared to have suddenly awakened to the fact of the insufficiency of her wardrobe. This last statement was confirmed by Miss Shore expressing a wish one morning to be driven into the village, as she had sundry small purchases to make.

Madge watched her drive away in the little pony carriage, in and out among the shifting shadows of the larches and sycamores. She noted that the grey gossamer veil was tossed back, as if the wearer enjoyed the greeting of the bright sunlight and mountain breeze, and that the young lady, as she sat, was turning to the man who drove her, as if asking him questions.

"Would to Heaven she would never come back!" Madge prayed in the bitterness of her heart. The bitterness ended in a sigh. If Lance had been so fascinated with the ice-cold shadowy maiden, what would he be in presence of such glowing flesh and blood loveliness as this!

"Weigh your wealth against her beauty, Madge Cohen, and see what it is worth," she cried aloud to herself bitterly.

Sir Peter's stay in town had been prolonged beyond the three days to which Lance would fain have limited it. The old gentleman once on the wing was not to be easily persuaded to settle down again.

"I can't get him back," wrote Lance to Madge, "he's here, there, everywhere; I might as well try to catch ether or sal volatile and get it into a railway-train as Uncle Peter. Town is a wilderness; there's nothing on earth for a man to do, yet his hands are full from morning till night. I should run down to Cowes or to Exmoor for a day or two, only I daren't leave him lest he should get into mischief. For one thing, I'm confident I've kept him out of the mumps. I missed him suddenly the other morning, and started in pursuit immediately. I traced him first to the telegraph office. I knew he had a lot to do there—off and on he has almost lived there lately—thence, I hunted him down to the boot-makers—he's always wanting boots, you know—and finally, to my horror, found him down a blind alley attempting to adjudicate between two little dirty boys who were fighting over their marbles. Both of the little imps had their faces tied up, and had a generally puffy appearance about the jaws. 'Uncle Peter,' I shouted, 'if there is anything to be caught, you'll catch it, depend upon it. Think of your birthday! Fancy receiving a deputation with your face tied up!' And so I dragged him away."

With Sir Peter in so active a frame of mind, Lance had found some difficulty in making an opportunity for the little serious talk with him, which he had planned. From morning till night the old gentleman

was never to be found alone. He received the secretaries of his pet charities at breakfast, the members of their committees at luncheon, and as a rule dined with, or received at dinner, certain clerical magnates who chanced to be in town. At the odd moments which occurred between his meals he was either inspecting orphanages, or reformatories, or immersed in charity reports and subscription-lists.

Lance had rehearsed over and over again a little speech which ran somewhat as follows: "Uncle Peter, you've always said, that on the day Madge and I get married, you'll set aside a certain definite property from which I can draw a certain definite income. But supposing that match never comes off! What then?"

To get opportunity, however, to make this little speech was another matter.

He seized a chance that presented itself one morning when Sir Peter, suddenly looking up from his papers, said:

"I shall get Madge to put down a handsome life-subscription to this 'working boys' refuge.' She might spend a couple of thousand yearly on charities and never miss it. Her income is princely."

Lance caught at the last words. "I don't believe there's a Prince in England with half her fortune! Don't you think it's a trifle presumptuous, on my part, with no independent means of my own, to aspire to a marriage with her?"

Sir Peter smiled up at him benignantly. "My dear boy, you're too modest! Your future is as assured as a man's can well be. You know—I've often told you, you stand in the position of an only son to me. And it strikes me, even if it were not so, that you'd stand comparison in Madge's eyes with the biggest millionaire in the kingdom. Ah, lend me your pencil a moment, I don't understand these figures—there's something wrong with this balance-sheet. I'll tot it up again!"

Again and again Lance beat about the bush, but all to no purpose.

"Supposing you'd had a son, what would you have done with me?" he asked abruptly on another occasion.

"Eh, what?" And Sir Peter pushed his spectacles high up on his forehead and said, "Eh, what?" again, before Lance's meaning dawned on him. "Well, my boy," he said at length, "I suppose you'd have followed your father's profession—been out in India by this time, and have led much such a life as he did. By the way, Lance, it occurs to me, seeing that

you belong to a Service family, that your name ought to appear on the military asylum committee. I'll get you nominated, and you can——"

"No, I can't," interrupted Lance. "I'm not cut out for that sort of thing." And then he took his hat and made for his club, fearful lest, willy-nilly, Sir Peter would drag him into one of those stuffy committee-rooms, in which so large a portion of his own time was passed with entire pleasure.

It was not until the morning of their return to Upton that Lance contrived to put the momentous question, "What then?" after its due prelude of "supposing Madge does not feel inclined to marry again!"

But it was absolutely out of the power of Sir Peter to realise such a possibility as this. "A young woman, at her age, to remain single all her life! Impossible, incredible! Tell me at once that she means to turn nun!" he exclaimed.

"Well, put it another way," said Lance impetuously, speaking on the spur of the moment. "Supposing that I were not inclined to settle down and marry just yet, what then?"

"What then!" cried Sir Peter, aghast. "My dear boy! My dear boy!" He jumped up from his chair and began walking up and down the room very fast. Then he stood in front of Lance, his eyes at first very bright, and then, suddenly altogether as dim. "After all these years—my most cherished hope! Impossible!" He began his favourite heel and toe movement as if on rockers. "My dear boy! My dear boy! Don't say it again! Impossible!"

After this, Lance thought it prudent to let the matter drop for a time.

Lady Judith had fidgeted a good deal over Sir Peter's prolonged absence.

"It's my belief, my dear, that Sir Peter has got into mischief of some sort, and Lance as usual has stood by and enjoyed the fun," she said to Madge.

But as the days slipped past, and Sir Peter's birthday approached, the note of complaint swelled to a louder tone.

"Most inconsiderate—most thoughtless of them both!" she declaimed. "I don't like to say what I think of such conduct; but any one who gives the matter a second thought must know how much their absence throws on my hands just now. The house will be full in a day or two—as many men as women to entertain. There are all sorts of final directions to give

about the villagers' sports, and the tenants' dinner. I ask you, Madge—is it possible for one brain to undertake the arrangement of all these things, in addition—mind, I say in addition—to other subjects for thought?"

Madge did not pay much heed to Lady Judith's laments. She appeared at that moment to be wholly absorbed in the completion of the decoration of her little octagon sitting-room—an occupation in which, strange to say, Mr. Stubbs's assistance had been volunteered and accepted. He it was who supplied her with the name and address of a man at Carstairs—an "art-decorator" he styled himself—who came to the Castle to take Mrs. Cohen's orders.

They were very simple. A long, narrow looking-glass was to be fixed in the wall facing the door, and a certain picture, which Mrs. Cohen had commissioned an artist to paint, was to hang immediately opposite. It was imperative that the room should be finished by the twenty-first, as it would be in use on the night of the ball.

## CHAPTER XXI.

SIR PETER and Lance returned to Upton three days before the old gentleman's birthday.

"Why a man at his time of life should insist on keeping his birthdays at all, passes my comprehension," Lady Judith was in the habit of saying, as the yearly festivity came round.

All things considered, however, the wonder was rather that Sir Peter, like the schoolboy intent on plum-cake, did not insist on keeping his birthday twice over in the twelve months. The general racket and fussiness of the whole thing suited him amazingly. The deputations from the tenants, the village sports, bonfires, bell-ringing, were an inexhaustible source of delight to him; the constant demands for his personal presence, for his attention to a thousand and one things at the same moment, sent him into ecstasies, and gave colour to his inner conviction, that he was the life and soul of things generally.

He came back from his holiday trip with Lance, looking very radiant, and evidently prepared to enjoy everything. The wagonette was not required to bring the two from the station, as it had been on so many dire occasions when Sir Peter had paid

flying visits to the metropolis, and had remained encumbered with stable-boys, or gardener's lads.

"No protégés this time," Lance telegraphed to Lady Judith on the morning of their return; "but lots of luggage. We've spent a good deal of time in toy-shops lately."

Yes, there was a good deal of luggage. Even Madge, who was accustomed to travel about with a haystack of trunks and dress-baskets, exclaimed at it as she saw it uncarted at the door.

"Presents of shawls for the old women, pipes for the old men, bushels of toys for the children, something for you, Madge, something for Aunt Judy—nobody forgotten!" exclaimed Lance.

Nobody had been forgotten; and there was one box in which Sir Peter showed a good deal of interest, and which, as the other boxes were carried to their destination, he desired to be placed for the moment in the hall.

"Madge will do it best—you ask her," he whispered to Lance.

"No, you ask her," whispered Lance back again. "Madge thinks a great deal more of your requests than she does of mine."

Madge, a few yards off, heard this remark, and came forward asking:

"What is expected of me?"

Sir Peter addressed Lance again:

"You explain; you know how it all came about."

"No, you do it," said Lance. "You've a much greater command of language than I have."

Sir Peter cleared his throat. "Well, my dear," he said, addressing Madge, "you see this is a season of rejoicing for us all. I've got well through a very nasty illness and——"

"Haven't caught anything fresh in town," suggested Lance.

"Exactly; have come back in excellent health——"

"Laden like Santa Claus at Christmas time," again suggested Lance.

"Exactly; shawls for the old women, pipes for the old men."

"Corals and gutta-percha toys for the babies—nobody forgotten," said Lance.

"No, nobody forgotten inside or outside the house," chimed Sir Peter. "And it occurred to us, for Lance, I may say, shared my feeling on the matter——" Here he looked at Lance, hoping that he would take up the thread of the narrative. Lance

remained dumb, however, so Sir Peter went on again:

"It occurred to us that—that at such a time of rejoicing, no one should be forgotten inside or outside the house——"

"You've said that before," said Lance.

"Ah, have I. Well, it occurred to—to us——"

"You've brought a present for Miss Shore?" asked Madge, jumping, as she so often did, at a possibility.

"Exactly, exactly, my dear," said Sir Peter, much relieved now that the truth was out. "Lance said to me——"

"No, you said to me," said Lance.

"Well, I said to Lance, 'I don't suppose, coming into the house in the unexpected way in which she did, that the young lady will have with her any dress suitable for the twenty-first,' and Lance said to me, 'It would be a crying shame for a handsome young woman like that not to make her appearance at the ball.' And so, my dear, the long and short of the matter is, we went to your dressmaker in Bond Street, and left it in her hands to send down a dress fit for the occasion."

Had the choice been given him, Lance, in Madge's hearing, would sooner have had the former than the latter speech put into his mouth. For some reason, however, he did not attempt to modify Sir Peter's statement.

"The question is now," Sir Peter went on cheerily, "how to present the dress to the young lady without hurting her feelings. Of course it would come better as a gift from you than from me."

"I couldn't do it—it would be impossible—quite, quite impossible," said Madge in a very low tone of voice, and with far more earnestness of manner than the occasion seemed to warrant.

"You always do that sort of thing so cleverly, Madge," put in Lance.

"You may be sure, my dear, the dress will be everything it ought to be," said Sir Peter, mistaking the cause of Madge's reluctance to present his gift. "I saw Madame Claire herself, and she said that nothing remained to be done to the dress that your maid couldn't do. It's a beautiful colour, a soft grey. Lance was very particular on this matter——"

"I couldn't do it. No, no, it would be quite impossible!" broke in Madge. Then, to avoid further discussion, she went back to the music-room and opened her piano. "It would be Judas-like," she said to herself, as she began to practice her singing



with a great deal of energy in a very high key.

"May I speak with you, Mrs. Cohen?" said Mr. Stubbs's voice over her shoulder, before she had been three minutes at the instrument.

"What is it?" asked Madge, letting her fingers glide into the quickest and loudest of Cramer's exercises.

"I merely wished to say that to-morrow the Australian mail will be delivered, and to ask for instructions in case a second letter may arrive for Sir Peter with the Rutland Bay post-mark."

No answer from Madge. Only her fingers threatened to trip each other up with the speed at which they travelled over the keys.

Mr. Stubbs waited patiently.

"What have you to propose?" at length she asked in a low, nervous voice, but still not lifting her fingers from the keys.

"If you wished it, madam, I would put any such letter on one side, until after the twenty-first," he said respectfully.

"Wait till one comes," was all Madge's reply, and then her fingers glided from Cramer's exercises into Weber's "*Hilarité*," which she executed at double-time, with the loud pedal down.

"Madge," said Sir Peter, coming into the room at that moment, "where is Miss Shore? I've been all over the garden in search of her. I want to know how your sketches are getting on."

Mr. Stubbs disappeared. Madge was all attention at once.

"The sketches have resolved themselves into a pair only, one of which is quite finished. I dare say Miss Shore is in the billiard-room, she has been at work there lately—the weather has been so wet. You know she gets the same view of the valley there as she does from the terrace."

All this she said with her eyes fixed on the piano keys. For the first time in her life she dared not look her benefactor in the face.

Sir Peter vanished, but was back again in two minutes.

"There's not a soul in the billiard-room," he said as he came along. "And where is Lance? I have a hundred and one things to consult him about; everything, every one seems all behindhand—"

Madge recollected that she had seen Lance pass outside the windows towards the conservatory. It occurred to her in a flash of painful thought that, where he was, it was possible Miss Shore might be.

A glass door at one end of the drawing-room commanded a view of this conservatory and gave admission to it. Madge led the way thither. Sir Peter followed her a step or two, then he remembered that he had forgotten to inquire after the health of his butler's mother, who suffered from rheumatic gout, and forthwith he flew off in an opposite direction, to set the library bell ringing, in order to have his mind set at rest on the matter.

The conservatory at the Castle was a large one, and was arranged rather with a view to general effect, than for the exhibition of choice flowering plants, as such. Seen from the drawing-room it was just a lovely tropical garden, where big flowering shrubs formed triumphal arches with palms, and tree-ferns; and glowing cactuses weaved a bowery ceiling with luxuriant passion-flower and the moon-convolvulus of Ceylon. A lemon and white macaw strutted majestically over the tessellated floor, scolding at the flies as it went along. A majolica fountain threw upward to the glass dome a sparkling jet of water, which caught the sunlight as it fell back into its basin among the broad-leaved Japanese lilies, and the flashing gold and silver fish. Beside this fountain stood the two of whom Madge was in search. Lance's fair, handsome face, though at one with the beauty of his surroundings, seemed to have its markedly Saxon type emphasized by them. Not so Miss Shore. Among roses in an English garden, she looked the foreigner she was; here among the palms and the cactuses she seemed to be in her own country. Those large, lustrous eyes of hers recalled the fire of the stars in a southern sky; that bandeau of jet-black hair seemed to demand magnolia or myrtle for its rightful crown.

Was that what Lance was thinking, for he had drawn downwards a heavy bough of a flowering myrtle tree? Miss Shore's hand waved it on one side as if she would have none of it.

"You hate the scent!" Madge could hear him say, "from association, I suppose? It must recall some scene, some person you hate—that I can understand."

Madge, fearing to play the listener, opened the door and went in. Miss Shore turned with a start. Her face was flushed; her eyes brilliant. Madge, who had seen that same face look a cold, expressionless adieu to Lance and Sir Peter, as they set off for London, could only marvel over its transfiguration.

Lance did not start; there was evidently

no intention on his part to hide his predilection for Miss Shore's society.

"Miss Shore has been telling me of her early days in—in—" he paused.

Miss Shore did not fill up the blank.

Madge felt disposed to suggest "Santa Maura," but forbore: "Norway, Greenland, Finland?" she said sarcastically.

"Absurd," cried Lance. "Say the North Pole at once! 'In the South,' you said, didn't you? at any rate where magnolia——"

"Where 'the cypress and myrtle are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,'" said Madge, to all appearance carelessly, but with keen eyes fixed on Miss Shore's face. She started, flushed red, then grew deathly pale again. "I hate that land. I would forget it," she said in low, nervous tones, halting and stumbling over her words. "My father was born in this country, and my father's people are living now up in the North."

"In the South." "In the North." Evidently the young lady did not choose to localise, with greater exactitude, either her own place of birth, or the home of her father's people.

"You will go to them when you leave here?" queried Madge, with a meaning hidden from the two who stood beside her.

"That is a far-away day at present I hope," interrupted Lance hastily. His eyes also were fixed, though not with the expression in them that Madge's had, on Miss Shore's face.

Miss Shore answered his words, not his look, for her eyes were bent upon the water-lilies in the fountain. "Who knows?" she answered absently. "If I say I will go here, go there, do this, do that, fate may say 'No' to me."

Lance gathered the water-lily on which her eyes were fixed. Look at him she should!

He presented the flower to her. "Fate is just another word for circumstances to my way of thinking," he said. "Some people rule them, some are ruled by them. Personally, I have found the second method an easy and agreeable way of getting through life."

Miss Shore toyed with the flower.

"Fate rules circumstances as well as people. There are some who from cradle to grave never have a chance given them——"

She broke off suddenly, turning her head away. Her voice had a wail in it.

Madge did not hear that wail. The

only thought her senses brought home to her, was that the heart of the man she loved was being won by the woman she hated.

Her eyes blazed, her face grew pale, but words she had none.

The sudden opening of the conservatory door which led into the garden let in a rush of fresh, outside air. It let in something else beside—Lady Judith's voice in gradual approach.

"If he would but believe that the world could get on without him," she was saying as she came along; and there could be no doubt to whom the "him" referred. "Now I ask you, can there be any necessity for him, so soon as his feet are inside the house, to set all the bells ringing, and messages flying in all directions, telling everybody that things are all behindhand, and must be hurried forward as fast as possible. Johnson" (the house-steward) "has been sent for, and had a hundred and one directions given him. He even seized upon Gordon" (the housekeeper) "as she was coming from my room, and told her, 'he hoped she would see to the airing of the spare beds herself——'"

Here Miss Shore quietly slipped away.

Lady Judith followed her with her eyes out of the conservatory, and then went on again:

"A positive insult to a woman who has done her duty for twenty-five years in the house as Gordon has! Then he rings for the butler——"

"But—but," interrupted Madge, "has he done all that in something under ten minutes? He was with me just now."

Lady Judith turned to Lance.

"If only you could have kept him another day in town, it would have been another day of peace for us all," she said, quite forgetting her former lament.

Lance slipped his arm into hers.

"Aunt Judy, let's go down to the farm together; I want to see the latest sweet thing in cock-a-doodles you have on view," he said.

And Lady Judith was all smiles and complaisance at once.

Madge stood among the palms and myrtles, looking down into the clear basin of the fountain, with its floating lilies, and flashing fish. Her "heart to her heart was voluble." "Lance, Lance," she thought, "would you hate me, could you know what I am doing for your sake?"

A shadow fell upon the sparkling water and gleaming fish. It was Mr. Stubbs approaching with a key in his hand.

"I have brought you the key of your sitting-room, madam," he said. "I thought you would wish it kept locked till the night of the ball. Everything is finished according to your orders."

Madge took the key. "Everything?" she queried.

"Everything, madam. And the door need not be unlocked until the morning of the twenty-first, when it will be unhinged and removed, and curtains substituted."

He turned to go. Madge called him back.

"One moment," she said. "You are confident that this is the best, the most effectual way of—of doing this thing?"

"I can see none better, madam."

"And you charge yourself with her departure—that is, with seeing her out of the house, and on her road to her people 'in the North,' wherever that may be?"

"I do, madam."

"Stay a moment. You may want money. It had better be in gold. If I write you a cheque for—for—?"

"A hundred pounds, madam?"

"Yes, a hundred pounds; can you get it cashed without exciting suspicion?"

"I will do my best, madam," said Mr. Stubbs, as he bowed and departed.

Later on that day Madge was to have another glimpse of Miss Shore.

Dinner was over; Lady Judith had as usual fanned herself to sleep on a couch in the drawing-room, Sir Peter and Lance had gone together to one of the farm meadows, to inspect the arrangements that had been made for the villagers' sports, that were to take place on the day following the ball. Madge, a little wearily, was crossing the gallery on the upper floor on her way to her room. A cool current of air, meeting her half-way thither, told her that one of the gallery-windows was open. Outside this window the stone parapet formed a narrow turreted balcony, and, kneeling there in the dim twilight, was a woman's figure. It was easy enough to identify her long graceful outline. Her hands were clasped, her face was upturned to the night sky with an eager, questioning look on it.

The Cuddaws stood out in defined gloomy grandeur against the deep translucent blue of the summer sky, one sharp, jutting crag cutting a segment off a great, golden harvest moon that was slowly sinking behind it.

High above both mountain and moon there shone out, among the legions of

stars, one glittering planet. On this the kneeling girl's eyes seemed fixed. Her lips moved. "Have mercy, have mercy," she said piteously, as if she were addressing a living human being.

Madge's heart at that moment must either have been of marble coldness or one quick fire of jealous love, for she went on her way with her purpose unshaken.

## HATFIELD HOUSE.

ON the Great Northern line the train runs many miles from King's Cross before it is clear of the villas of modern London, advancing northwards, like a great army, with outposts lying hid in all the quiet vales, and vedettes appearing on the crest of every hill.

Barnet is left behind with its memories of the old battle-field; but that now is pretty much of a suburb of Greater London. Potter's Bar is reached and passed, and yet we are still hardly beyond the lines of bricks and mortar. Then there comes a strip of pleasant country, gently undulating, green and well-wooded. The woods rise in a gentle sweep; avenues and terraces appear for a moment; there is a glimpse of a massive structure, with tower and turrets rising among the trees, and of the tall spire of a church hard by; and then Hatfield is reached, and the end of our journey.

Not far from the station appear the twisted iron gates and the red-bricked lodge, that give an entrance to Hatfield Park; but the ancient way is the one for pedestrians; through the town that is, a town that seems to have some business of its own, with tall chimneys here and there, and yards opening out with prospects of drays and vans, and rows of cottages, whose builders have studied the useful rather than the picturesque.

Mounting the High Street—and the word mounting is used advisedly, for it is something of a climb to the top—these commercial, or rather manufacturing symptoms disappear. Here are the country shops and the gabled cottages, and the snug, warm-looking professional houses, all aligned upon the highway that makes uncompromisingly up the hill. Near the top of the ascent the street breaks off into a pleasant green churchyard, and the church with its grey old tower and tall spire appears to the view. And a little beyond is an ancient archway flanked by brick

buildings which bear the cachet of the days of the Tudors, with all the subdued and varied hues that old Time has laid upon roofs and walls in these centuries past.

The archway leads into a grassy court, one side of which is occupied by a range of buildings of the same mellow red-brick, here a square tower, and there a row of mullioned windows, with quaint brick mouldings and picturesque gables and arched doorways opening into deep shaded interiors. A gateway pierced in this range of charming domestic buildings, corresponds with the archway we have entered by, and gives a glimpse of waving trees beyond, and the green sward of the park.

Here are the stables of the mansion, and stables with a history. For such as they are, they formed a part of the old Palace of Hatfield; here was the banqueting hall, there the chapel; and the gateway, that now shows the sheen of trees and grass, once led into the solemn shaded quadrangle, about which clustered chambers and domestic offices with their façades of sombre brickwork. This, the west wing of that structure, is the only part now remaining, the rest was demolished to make room for the present Hatfield House.

Such historical associations, therefore, as are of an earlier date than the reign of the first James, are connected with the remains of the old palace. The site was, it seems, once a residence of Saxon Kings; but before the Conquest it had been given, with the manor belonging to it, to the Abbot of Ely.

The forest supplied pannage for two thousand hogs according to Doomsday, and there was a Priest who served the little church, and looked after the souls of fifty or sixty humble households, whose habitations were clustered round. And there were meadow and pasture sufficient, and four mills, which must have supplied grist to all the country round. Such was the manor of Hatfield when the Abbot of Ely had it, and when, instead of an Abbot, there came to be a Bishop of Ely, such it still remained.

The Abbot's pleasant manor-house was then enlarged and improved no doubt, and that busy, constructive prelate, Morton—afterwards Cardinal and Archbishop, and the builder of the well-known gateway at Lambeth Palace—erected a new palace on the site, and the building, half college and half cloister, still exists for use in this one solitary wing.

When the Reformation came, King Henry cast covetous eyes upon this pleasant and noble dwelling, and he made the Bishop of Ely give up Hatfield in exchange for lands elsewhere. Here Prince Edward spent some of his early years; and when the grim old monarch his father died, hither came princes and nobles to conduct the poor youth to the throne of his ancestors. Elizabeth, too, spent much of her youth at Hatfield, and she was here when the news came of her sister Mary's death.

With this incident end the chronicles of the old building. James the First exchanged the palace for Lord Burghley's manor of Theobalds, and presently the old gave place to the new. Other times, other manners; and as we pass from out the shadow of the quiet old arch, and into the sunshine and sheen beyond, we see before us Hatfield House, seated proudly among its glades and terraced gardens in quaint magnificence.

The place is by no means a solitude at this present moment. Here is a girls' school marching up the avenue; groups of sightseers are scattered over the wide expanse of gravel in front of the main entrance; and others are to be seen among the leafy avenues of the park. It is the north front of the house that is before us—what in less elaborate buildings we should call the back of the house—not so stately, or so richly ornamented as the front, that faces the sunshine, but still sufficiently imposing, with its mullioned windows, its projecting porch, and its clock-tower, whilst pilasters and enrichments, and the solid, sturdy brickwork, are all mellowed by time and weather into a soft, harmonious hue, that contrasts with the dark-green of the ivy that has covered parts of the building with its mantle.

The southern front is more elaborate, with two massive projecting wings, each with its four tourelles, while the central tower shows to still more advantage with its battlements curiously arranged to show the date, 1611, when the house was finally completed. The centre shows an arched colonnade, running the whole length of the building, while the columns between the arches are continued in a different order in the floor of state above, and quaint and ornamented gables crown the whole design. Here, too, time has been at work, and has thrown its subdued tints over the whole frontage, so that anything heavy and formal in the original design of the



building is softened and redeemed by the charm of its unequalled colouring. And the whole is set off by the emerald sward, out of which the great house rises in all its stateliness and dignity.

Everything about the outward appearance of the mansion suggests a certain unity of conception, and recalls the individuality of its founder. Robert Cecil, the first Earl of Salisbury, was the builder, and even, it is said, the designer and architect of Hatfield House. The evidence, indeed, is rather negative than positive; but among the detailed accounts of the charges and costs attending the erection of the great house, preserved among the archives of the Cecils, there is no mention of an architect or his charges. One Conn, a master mason, and Syminge, a carpenter, mere country artisans, but clearly skilled beyond the common, carried out the Earl's designs; and the panelling and carving, with which the interior is so richly adorned, were executed in London according to my lord's directions. The Cecils, indeed, were great builders. Lord Burghley, the father of Earl Robert, had erected Salisbury House in the Strand, Burghley House in the Midlands, and Theobald's Chase, by Enfield Chase. The first and last have entirely disappeared; but Burghley House still remains—a fine specimen of a Tudor mansion. Robert Cecil, however, took a new departure. There is little Tudoresque about Hatfield House, which is rather of a Franco-Italian school—the school of decadence some might call it; but whether decadence or renaissance, of a sombre, serious dignity characteristic of its founder. Everywhere, whether chiselled in stone, or carved in oak, you meet with the favourite, self-adopted motto of the wise Earl, “Sero sed serio,” a motto that seems full of meaning when read by the light of Robert Cecil's life-history.

And now to present ourselves and our credentials at the chief entrance, on the cool-shaded northern front of the house. Here, after passing through an ordinary entrance-lobby, hung with the hats, coats, and umbrellas of the period, we are ushered into the fulness of the seventeenth century all at once—its grace, its variety, and colour. Here is the hall—the marble hall, as familiarly known, from its pavement of squares of white and black marble—and a noble, well-proportioned hall it is, with richly-ornamented roof, with a fine music-gallery of carved oak at

one end, from which hang tattered banners, the relics of modern fields of warfare. The upper part of the walls is hung with fine Gobelins tapestry, the lower is panelled in oak, with a fine, quaint, oaken chimney-piece, and high mullioned windows, which give place at one end to a more modern bow, affording a pleasant view of the terrace and leafy glades beyond. The oaken panels are relieved with ancient portraits. Here is Elizabeth, with ruff and stomacher, and again as a girl in a wild, mythologic costume; here is Mary of Scots, taken not long before her execution, and looking old and worn; and here are other personages Royal and noble.

There is still a mediæval touch about the hall; beards have wagged merrily when the long tables were spread, there have been mummers and masquers, and an echo of the light-hearted gaiety of old times seems to linger about the place, as of the days when “my grave Lord Keeper led the brawls,” and the merry minstrelsy echoed in the vaulted roof.

But even when Hatfield was building the old manners were passing away, and the arrangements are rather of a stately house, where Royal guests and the highest of the land may be entertained, than of the ancient English hall where gentle and simple gathered in noisy revelry.

With all the turning and winding, the sudden changes of scene and front, it is difficult to retain a symmetrical impression of such a house as Hatfield, with sombre, oaken-panelled corridors opening upon bright scenes, where the rich stores of centuries are spread out to view:

The ceiling's fretted height,  
Each panel in achievements clothing,  
Rich windows that exclude the light,  
And passages that lead to nothing.

Only, so far from “leading to nothing,” all the communications are arranged with an order and compactness that reflect great credit on the constructive sagacity of the wise Lord Keeper who planned them. On the ground-floor, besides the domestic offices, with halls, pantries, kitchens, and everything belonging to the service of the house, which occupy the west wing, there are the fine hall already mentioned, a dining-parlour, as it was called, at the foot of the great stairs, and a summer breakfast and drawing-room. Then we have the cloisters—originally so called—once an open arcade, running along the whole of the central front—a notable architectural feature in the building. Within the

last half century, the cloisters have been glazed in, and now form the armoury, adorned with suits of armour, with buff coats, weapons, and other relics of the past.

Then we come to a fine oaken staircase, far too distinguished to be characterised as "back stairs," but still subsidiary to the great State staircase. There is a fine play of light and shade, all sombre and subdued, about the massive oaken stairs; and, adding to the effect with a subtle charm of which it is difficult to give any idea, we hear from the regions above a sweet young voice, carolling a pleasant tune, that rings about these old oaken-panelled rooms with beautiful freshness. Then a warning, slightly-reproachful voice calls softly, "Rebecca!" and the song is suddenly hushed. But it has cast a glamour about the place, such as lingers long in the memory.

All is stately and dignified in this the grand State floor of Hatfield House. There are great bedchambers, with their monumental bedsteads, their portraits, their tapestry, their carved chimney-pieces, their pleasant outlook on lawn or pasture. In former days, these were impersonally distinguished, say, as the rose-room, the yellow-room, and so on; no doubt after the colour of their hangings. But a more interesting nomenclature now prevails. Here is the Beaconsfield room, which the great parliamentary chieftain occupied when he visited Hatfield; the Wellington room, adorned with portraits of the great Captain; and the Queen's room, where Royalty reposed once upon a time. There is a chaplain's room below, where his reverence is handsomely lodged, you may imagine, and which is hung with some marvellous tapestry, which seems among the most ancient in the building. Then we have the State bedchamber of King James himself, the cannie goodman from Scotland, who owed so much, perhaps even his crown, to Robert Cecil, and who, for once, was not ungrateful. Here is the great bedstead, all upholstered with cloth of gold, sadly faded and filmy now, with the Royal cypher and other devices, and the chamber service of those times.

Strongly characteristic, and charming too, is the long gallery with its gilded, fretted ceiling, which stretches from end to end of the south front. So long is the gallery, that from either end, the roof seems wanting in height; but seen from the centre, this defect is removed, and,

with its antique furniture, its bric-a-brac, its quaint tapestry, imagination can fitly people it with the forms of the statesmen and courtiers of old times, with high-born dames and lovely damsels, the rustle of whose silks and satins, with the faint perfume of the roses and lilies of other days, seems to linger still in this stately gallery. The tapestry of the gallery is especially remarkable, being English and of the time of Henry the Eighth, and representing the four seasons in quaint archaic manner, with the Signs of the Zodiac sprawling over its margins. Here is an organ which is said to have belonged to King James the First, and many relics of earlier times and more glorious epochs are scattered here and there.

At the west end of the gallery is the library, with glimpses of the trim and ancient gardens where Gloriana gathered flowers, and the sagacious Burghley paced with stately tread and pondered on great affairs of State. Here are the shelves that Robert Cecil filled with the literature of his day. But the most valuable of the contents of the library are the Cecil manuscripts, containing Ministerial papers, invaluable to the student of the period which they cover. As Elizabeth's principal Secretary of State, Cecil was the centre of all the correspondence that came before the Royal council, relating to all the multitudinous details of home and foreign politics. The clues of all the tangled threads of policy were in his hands, and when his old mistress, Queen Elizabeth, died, it might have been said that the disposal of the crown was virtually in his hands. The Scottish King was the surest card, and Cecil played it—reaping the reward of his sagacity in titles and honours, which raised the youngest son of the house of Cecil to an equality, at all events, with the firstborn.

Cecil's thoughtful, melancholy face and feeble frame appear over the chimney-piece of the library—done in Florentine mosaic, with all the rich colouring of the splendid dress of the period. And this is the room that his shade might be supposed especially to haunt. For the Earl was a bookish man, with tastes far removed from the ruffling and dashing courtiers his rivals. Elizabeth called him "her pigmy," and James "his little beagle." The son of elderly parents, he inherited but a weakly constitution. His mother was a pious, learned woman, the sister of Francis Bacon's mother, by

the way, but unbeautiful if her portraits at Hatfield are not grossly libellous; rich in mental gifts, but worn and feeble in body. With her son an inherited frailness of constitution was counterbalanced by the gift of earnest application, and thus he justified his favourite motto here as elsewhere frequently repeated, "*Sero sed serio.*" Strange it seems that the genius of the founder of the line should have slumbered these many generations, and that now, in the days of Victoria, the descendant of Elizabeth's two great statesmen, father and son, should be found at the head of affairs, and guiding the domestic and foreign policy of the country in the manner of his ancestors, under such changed conditions. "*Sero sed serio!*"

But the library with its folios, manuscripts, and gilded tomes is left behind, and rooms of state succeed one after the other. The great chamber, or King James's room, is a noble room corresponding in size with the marble hall below, adorned with ancient portraits, and rich in antique furniture, with a great marble chimney-piece in the taste of a later period, and a bronze effigy of King James the First presiding over the scene. Here are many relics of the Virgin Queen: her garden-hat, resembling the hay-makers' hats of to-day, but cunningly wrought in silk and gold thread, and her silk stockings.

Interesting, too, is the domestic chapel in the west wing, with its florid Italian ornaments, and stained windows of rich Flemish glass, and its snug luminous gallery with a throne for Royal occupants, and high-backed chairs covered with embroidery worked by notable dames who, centuries ago, were turned to dust. It is noticeable that the great fire which in 1835 destroyed a great part of the western wing, and in which the Dowager-Countess perished, just reached the chapel, and was there subdued, sparing the chief part of the venerable fabric. The wing itself has been restored in exact accordance with its former state, and, except for a difference in the tone of its colouring, can now hardly be distinguished as modern.

Then there are other dining and withdrawing-rooms adapted to the changing seasons of the year, and other famous chambers, of which the memory recalls especially the elm-room, with its panelling and ornaments entirely in that sombre wood. And here are some extremely curious portraits—one of Elizabeth, by Frederick Zuccherò, painted when the

Queen was still in the prime of life, with abundant hair and youthful features, while still untouched by time are

Her lion port, her awe-commanding face.

It is in the emblematic taste of the period—the Royal robes studded with eyes and ears—symbols of Royal attributes, while the serpent, Wisdom, is twined around one arm, and the other hand holds a rainbow, with the flattering inscription, "*Non sine sole Iris.*"

Here, too, appears the sagacious Lord Burleigh, by the same artist, a man of fresh and cheerful countenance, one whose nod we may be sure was rather brisk and incisive, than of that solemn and pompous character with which tradition has somehow invested it.

In this, or some other room adjacent, is the Cecil pedigree, an affair of portentous dimensions, and placed in a kind of press with rollers, on which it can be wound up or down. It begins with Adam, and conducts the reader, by gentle gradations, down to the time of Queen Elizabeth. The marvel of the pedigree is, however, lessened when we learn that the Cecils were originally Welsh, for a Welsh genealogy slips easily back to Adam, and that the family name was originally, according to English spelling, *Sitaill*, which is, perhaps, in Welsh, *Sysyllt*, or *Essyllt*—a region in North Wales, which puzzled Romans ventured to call *Siluria*.

Passing onwards we reach the grand staircase, up and down which have passed, with flowing trains, in hoops, in farthing-gales, in patches, in powder, with towering hair or gently waving curls, so many generations of England's fairest and proudest dames. Twisted balusters, all the turner's and carver's art, are here displayed, zigzags and florid ornament. The general effect is rich and stately, befitting grand receptions; courtly ceremonies; Charles with his melancholy fated look; his Queen with her frizzled locks; the second Charles in the bravery of silks and velvets; Queen Anne with her hoops; the gallant Sidneys, nobles, and courtiers of every degree—all these might step forth from the canvasses that adorn the walls, and thronging the grand staircase irrespective of chronology, would harmonise well enough with their surroundings.

One of the characteristics of Hatfield is the continuous occupation that has lasted since the house was built, with only gradual changes as times and manners changed. How many of our ancient houses,

still subsisting and visited by the curious, have fallen at one time or other into the condition described by Pope, when an owl flying in mistook the place for a barn; so that their present antiquities are suggestive of Wardour Street and the bric-a-brac shops. But Hatfield has known neither decadence nor decay, and has remained continuously the home of one and the same family since the days of the great statesman of Elizabeth and James.

And now we reach the terraced lawn of the south front, and the gardens of Hatfield lie before us. There are many gardens, of different ages and tastes—modern beds of colour, shaded walks, clipped yew and box, labyrinth, sun-dials, and mossy cells. But the most charming, from its veritable antiquity, is the square garden on the west side of the house, known as Queen Elizabeth's garden. It is doubtless of her time, and belonged equally to the old palace that Morton built; and, indeed, a fragment of the palace wall is to be found on one side of it. It is just such a garden as Francis Bacon gives directions for, "with a stately arched hedge" round three sides of it, pleached arbours, such as Shakespeare, perhaps, took the pattern of from this very garden, and planted with the same homely, beautiful flowers, that Perdita scatters among her followers. Nowhere can one linger among the perfumes of the past with more delight. At the four corners are four mulberry trees planted by the Royal hand of James the First. James, we know, was great in mulberries, and they were planted all over the country under his directions.

Then we pass a sunken rose-garden, which also seems to have belonged to the old palace. The time of roses is well-nigh past, and their petals are scattered with every sigh of the summer wind, but the fragrance of them lingers still.

Now that we have reached the north front of the house once more, the long avenue stretches invitingly into the recesses of the park. The number of people attracted to the place has increased. The member of the county police who is on guard by the terrace is the centre of a throng of enquirers. School-children play hide-and-seek among the trees, or picnic comfortably on the grass, while teachers and pastors repose amicably in the shade. But there is no other party on the way to Elizabeth's oak, which lies somewhat to the right of the main avenue. There on a knoll stands the gaunt, lifeless trunk of an

old oak, propped up here and there, and surrounded by a railing. The oak was old, no doubt, but still vigorous and festooned with russet leaves when Elizabeth, in the soft gloom of a November afternoon, stood beneath its branches, waiting expectant of she knew not what. Perhaps of a more rigorous captivity, of the Tower, of the block. The cavalcade that approached, riding hard through the woodlands, had come to greet her as Queen of England, and among the historic gathering was Sir William Cecil, the future Lord Burleigh, who could have had no notion, then, that Hatfield would come into the possession of his descendants.

Beyond Elizabeth's oak lies the vineyard, which Robert Cecil named and designed as a real vineyard, and for which he bought twenty thousand vines. But soon after his time the grounds were transformed into a kind of stately pleasure, with walks overarched with yew, descending by many devious ways to the grassy margin of the river. It is the River Lea, that, widened into a broad reach, glides softly by. The opposite bank is thickly clothed in wood, through which a narrow avenue has been cut, with an old-fashioned garden-house closing the vista. An air of sombre calm and seclusion hangs about the scene, harmonising with the rich verdure, the graceful curve of the river, the waterfowl sailing in stately procession across the stream, the peacocks stalking on the terraces, the gentle rustle of leaves, and whisper of the breeze.

So we turn back towards that world whose voice every now and then disturbs the solemn stillness of the scene; through grassy rides driven through wildernesses of fern, where rabbits are scattered like stones on a highway, and where the pheasants rustle to and fro as fearless as the birds on Selkirk's isle. Here are old oaks to be found, monstrous in bulk, decayed, awful in age, yet with green branches here and there, the relics of some mighty forest—oaks under which Saxon Kings may have held their rural courts.

Passing out from under the old palace archways, and looking down the steep High Street, with the tufted valley below, where the railway is whistling its summons to all and sundry—the churchyard close at hand, green and well kept, with open gate, invites the passing footsteps. The church is open, too—a handsome country church with no striking features,



except for some quaint effigies of the once possessors of Brocket Park, and the Salisbury Chapel. Here, enclosed within an iron railing, are the tombs of the Cecils, with the monument of the first Earl of Salisbury occupying the place of honour. The Earl, in his robes of state, is stretched upon a marble slab, supported by figures emblematic of the four cardinal virtues, while beneath reposes a wasted cadaver, mere skin and bone. The moral is trite and obvious enough—

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

And passing round the churchyard again we get a final glimpse of the old palace and gatehouse, with great Hatfield House rising massively in the background, the whole embowered in foliage and lit up by a passing ray of sunlight, while stormy rain-clouds closing in heighten the momentary glow.

#### COME.

COME, Love, come, the bonny boat  
On the blue seas lies afloat,  
With her red flag flying steady,  
And her white wings spread already;  
Come, the waves are whispering low,  
In the music that we know;  
And the wooing western breeze  
Whispers o'er the sunny seas,  
Mocking lingering doubts delay:  
Youth and gladness, come away,  
Leave the cares of earth behind,  
Trust the waves, and trust the wind.

Come, Love, come, says hope and youth  
In the glow of passionate truth;  
What have we with fear to do,  
We, life's own triumphant two?  
Age and prudence whisper warning,  
In the glory of the morning,  
Shall not noon be glad and gay,  
Evening sweeter than the day;  
Love will make and smooth the path,  
Come, and face the world in faith:  
What shall each fair venture find?  
Ask the waves and ask the wind.

#### IN A VILLAGE POST OFFICE.

WHEN old Mrs. Pryer—who kept the post office in our village for a long series of years—died, there was some difficulty in finding a successor. One or two of our leading shopkeepers applied for the appointment; but as soon as they ascertained how much the Post Office authorities required and how little they paid, my neighbours turned up their noses at the business and refused to have anything to do with it. It really seemed for a time as if nobody would be found to undertake the responsibility, and that the inhabitants of Avonhill would have to forego the advan-

tages of postal communication with the outer world. In this emergency, our Rector appealed to me. He represented the serious nature of the crisis in our parochial history, and he was supported in his appeal by the head postmaster of the nearest town, who seemed very anxious to place the village post office in my hands. This gentleman briefly explained the nature of the duties, and assured me that I should have no difficulty in performing them. I listened to these joint representations, hesitated for a while, and at last was persuaded to become sub-postmaster of Avonhill.

My appointment was, I think, generally acceptable to my fellow villagers. Some of the intimate friends of the late Mrs. Pryer disapproved, probably because they felt that, with the office in my hands, they would not enjoy such opportunities as they formerly possessed for obtaining information about their neighbours' affairs. The late sub-postmistress was a great gossip herself, and most of her associates were like-minded. I do not wish to injure the respected memory of my predecessor; but I know that in her days the post office was the local school for scandal, and now it is sometimes said that the village is much more dull and uninteresting than it was when she and her friends concerned themselves about everybody's business. Their gossip was usually harmless enough; but there were, I believe, occasions upon which she was officially rebuked for her indiscretion, and seriously warned to be more careful for the future.

This, however, is a digression. Whatever my own failings may be, I hope I am not wanting in discretion, and I can confidently affirm that I have never betrayed by word or gesture anything that has come to my knowledge in my capacity of sub-postmaster. Necessarily I have learnt a great deal about my neighbours from seeing the outside of their correspondence; but the information I have thus acquired I have always kept to myself, though I have often been sorely tempted to disclose it. When, for instance, my old friend and neighbour at the Hall Farm suspected her pretty daughter Mary of carrying on a clandestine correspondence with a young and good-looking scapegrace from the neighbouring town, and of having letters left at the post office to be called for, a word, or even a look of mine would have cleared up or confirmed her suspicions. And when our relieving officer enquired whether old Hannah Brown—who had

asked for help from the parish—was in the receipt of periodical remittances through the post, an answer from me might have saved the worthy man a good deal of further labour. But I have learned to hold my peace, and even to control my features lest they should betray official secrets.

My house is in the middle of our village street, and stands a little back from the road. Formerly I cultivated a few flowers in the small front garden, and my heartsease were considered the finest for miles round, blooming freely all the spring and summer. Alas! they have now disappeared, for I have been obliged to remove the flower beds and to put down gravel to allow the public to get access to the letter-box in my front window. I have also been compelled to provide a counter in what was my sitting-room, and to fit it up in other respects as an office. All this has been done for the most part at my own cost. The authorities allowed me four pounds; but I spent three times that amount in preparing my house for postal purposes. In wet weather my doorstep is never clean, and in fine weather the house is very dusty downstairs, as the front door is always open.

My daily round of duty begins at a quarter before six in the morning, summer and winter, week days and Sundays. At that early hour I must be up to receive the mail which arrives by cart from the neighbouring post town, the letters and newspapers in a canvas bag or bags, and the parcels in a hamper. Having satisfied myself that the receptacles are externally in proper order, I sign the driver's time-bill and he proceeds on his journey. I then open the bags, examine the bill to see if there are any registered letters, and any letters upon which unpaid postage must be collected, and if there are such I stamp them with a dated stamp and place them on one side for a time. Next I stamp the ordinary letters and sort them and the newspapers in readiness for the letter-carriers, who attend at half-past six o'clock. There are two of them, one delivering the correspondence for Avonhill and the immediate neighbourhood, while the other performs a long and somewhat circuitous march to several of our adjacent hamlets. Before they start they have to arrange the letters and packets in the order of delivery, and whilst they are doing this I unpack the parcel-post hamper and dispose of the contents, which they have also to deliver. At seven o'clock, or a little later, they are

despatched, and, as the office is open to the public at that hour for the sale of stamps, and for answering enquiries, I must be ready to attend to early comers.

I am not as a rule much troubled by the public until nine o'clock, when telegraph, money-order, and savings bank business begins. At first I found telegraphy very difficult; indeed for some time I was quite unequal to sending or receiving messages at the required speed, and a clerk from the head office was detailed for the duty as a temporary measure. Young people learn telegraphy more easily than their seniors, and though I have now made myself a fairly efficient telegraphist, I shall never become very expert at the work. This is not, perhaps, very material, because Avonhill folks do not send or receive many telegrams. Half-a-dozen in and as many out are about our daily averages, and I can manage that number pretty well, although, if two or three happen to come in succession and people are wanting attention in other directions, it is rather worrying. We do not in so small a place transact much money-order or postal-order business, and, except at the end of the week, our savings bank deposits and withdrawals are not numerous. People who save money are very suspicious, and seem very anxious that their friends should not know of it. They ask all sorts of questions as to the safety of the bank, and whether they may be quite sure that the amount of their deposits will be kept secret. A man once told me he would be quite satisfied to leave his money in my hands, but he did not like the idea of having it sent to London. He seemed to think all Londoners rogues, and I had some trouble to get the notion out of his head; indeed, I have only partially succeeded for the other day he informed me that he looked to me to make it all right if the London clerks made any mistake, or lost his money. People can now buy Government Stock through the post office, and occasionally I have a Stock transaction, but there are often a lot of preliminary enquiries on the part of would-be investors. I am asked to explain the difference between Reduced and Consols, and Mr. Goschen's Conversion Scheme has cost me a lot of trouble. One old maid was very indignant at the reduction of the interest to two and three-quarters per cent., and I was quite unable to pacify her. She said it was a shame; that it was very cruel and wicked

to rob a poor unprotected woman; and finally declared that there would have been no reduction had poor dear Mrs. Pryer been living. Another troublesome class of depositors are the children and others who save by buying stamps and sticking them on to the forms issued by the department for that purpose. As soon as the value of the stamps amounts to a shilling the child can make a regular deposit; but the process of saving pennies is very tedious, and I am often asked whether I can remove one of the stamps and give the owner a penny, as he wants the money to buy something. Fortunately in the interest of thrift I am obliged to refuse; but I am afraid my young friend thinks me very hard-hearted, and leaves my office disappointed at being unable to raise money on his little security.

All day long I am selling stamps, or answering miscellaneous enquiries about every branch of postal business. Old Job Crawley, who has a son in Canada from whom he has not heard for a longer period than usual, is very anxious to know when the mails come in, and if I am quite certain there is no letter for him in the office. When I assure him there is not, he asks me to write to London and enquire if his long-looked-for letter has not been put on one side there; and if I tell him such an occurrence is impossible, he looks very doubtfully at me, and then wants to know how I can say that, since I have not looked myself. Perhaps a small boy has been sent in to post a letter, and has dropped the penny given him to pay for the stamp; he would like the letter to be sent free of charge, and turns away in despair when I say it cannot be done. If a parcel is damaged in transit the receiver comes to me with his complaint, and may insinuate that I have done the mischief myself. At first, all this sort of things troubled me a good deal; but I am by this time quite hardened.

Our general mail goes out at seven o'clock, but there is a despatch at midday, and a second mail is received at two o'clock in the afternoon. The letters arriving by the second mail are only delivered by carrier in Avonhill itself, and people living outside the village must fetch their letters if they want them before the next morning. On five days a good many applications are made for the letters arriving in the afternoon; and sometimes I have more callers than letters. At six o'clock, the rural postman, who started at

seven in the morning returns, bringing with him the letters he has collected on his inward journey, and from the time of his arrival until seven o'clock there is plenty to do. The letter-box closes at a quarter before seven, and the bulk of the letters are posted during the preceding half-hour. Not only is there the pressure caused by the posting of letters themselves, but the people who bring them often buy stamps or make enquiries; and though money-order and savings bank business ceases at six o'clock—except on Saturdays, when it is continued for another hour—telegrams can be sent off and received until eight.

The hour immediately preceding the despatch of the mail is the busiest of the whole day, and I am obliged to get assistance to enable me to perform the duty. When the bags are made up, and the parcel-hamper packed, it is time for the mail-cart to call, and the cart is generally punctual. It is with a certain amount of relief I see the bags and hamper carried out of the house, although the day's work is not over. The office remains open until eight o'clock; and when it is finally closed for the night I have my accounts to make up, and often some official correspondence to attend to. Not until nine, sometimes even later, do my duties as sub-postmaster of Avonhill come to an end; and I am generally so tired that I am glad to go to bed.

I get more leisure time on Sundays. A mail comes in the morning at the ordinary time, and letters are delivered as on week days; but there are no money transactions beyond the sale of a few stamps, and there is very little telegraphing. At ten o'clock the office is closed, and I have no other duty but to send off the evening mail, which is lighter than on week days.

I flatter myself that I do a good day's work for the post office. Fifteen hours is, I think, quite enough; and though there are days when I have few customers, I must always be ready for them during the hours the office is open. Occasionally I manage to go off duty for an hour or two in the afternoon, but my assistant, who helps me to send off the evening mail, is not often available during the day. I am not too liberally paid, and I am not entitled to a pension. Happily, I am not entirely dependent on my official salary—I pity the unfortunate sub-postmasters who are—and sometimes, when the work is heavier

than usual, I am sorely tempted to throw up the appointment, and to return into the private station from which I emerged to become sub-postmaster of Avonhill.

### DEGENERATE WORDS.

THE history of a word is often singularly like that of a human being. Some words rise from a very lowly origin in the slums of slang to respectability and general use and acceptance; others, entering the language under much more favourable conditions, fall by mischance or neglect into disuse, and drag out a maimed existence in provincial or dialectal forms. In worse case even than the latter are those words which, having been for many years, perhaps for centuries, in ordinary use by the best writers, gradually sink into disrepute, and being heard only in colloquial or vulgar language, find a last resting-place in the pages of a slang dictionary. Such words in their decline often undergo a slight change of meaning. They are no longer used with accuracy and precision, but become contaminated by the company they keep, and acquire new significations, coarser and broader than of old. A good example is the word "gob." As a noun this is now vulgarly applied to the mouth, and as a verb it means to swallow. "Shut your gob!" is a polite invitation to silence among certain classes of society. Says Tom Cringle in the first chapter of Michael Scott's famous sea story: "I thrust half a doubled-up muffin into my gob." But the word itself is a very ancient and respectable one. "Gob" formerly meant, in a general sense, a small portion, mass, or collection of anything. In its longer form of "gobbet" it is found not unfrequently in *Piers Plowman*, Chaucer, and Wiclif. It was often used literally or metaphorically to describe a mouthful or a piece of anything just large enough or fit to be put into the mouth at once. In Ludowick Barry's comedy of *Ram-Alley*, published in 1611, one of the characters says that "Throate the lawyer swallowed at one gob" certain land "for less than half the worth." A hundred and sixty years later, Foote, in his farce *The Cozeners*, describes how "Doctor Dewlap twisted down such gobs of fat." The old general meaning seems to have survived in America. In Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad," Gibraltar is described as "pushed out into the sea on the end of a flat, narrow strip

of land, and is suggestive of 'a gob' of mud on the end of a shingle."

Another degenerate word is "clean," in the sense of "entirely," or "altogether." The word with this meaning was constantly employed by the best writers until a very recent date, but its use now in serious writing would be considered colloquial, if not vulgar. To be "shut of" a person or thing, meaning to be rid of him or it, is a familiar provincialism in the Northern Counties of England, and is also to be frequently heard among the lower order of Londoners. But the phrase was formerly in respectable literary use. It is used by Massinger in the *Unnatural Combat*, 1639, Act iii., scene 1:

We are shut of him,  
He will be seen no more here.

Bunyan, who was naturally fond of racy and proverbial expressions, uses it in the "Holy War." Many years earlier, Thomas Nashe employs the phrase in his satirical pamphlet, "Have with you to Saffron Walden," where, in the "Address to the Reader," referring to his unfortunate antagonist, the pedantic Gabriel Harvey, he writes: "I have him haunt me up and downe to be my pretense to learne to endite, and doo what I can, I shall not be shut of him."

To "cotton," meaning to agree with, to take to, is now a common colloquial expression. As the poet says in the "Ingoldsby Legends":

For when once Madame Fortune deals out her hard raps,

It's amazing to think  
How one cottons to drink!

This use of the word, however, was common several centuries ago. It is found occasionally in the Elizabethan writers, but perhaps the earliest known example is the following, from Thomas Drant's translation of Horace, published in 1567:

So feyneth he, things true and false  
So alwayes minglet he,  
That first with midst, and midst with laste,  
Maye cotten and agree.

The word is entered in Bartlett's "Dictionary of Americanisms," but as this quotation shows, "to cotton," like so many other so-called Americanisms, is simply a survival, in vulgar use on both sides of the Atlantic, of a respectable old English word. It may be noted by the way, as regards its etymology, that it has no connection with the plant cotton, but is derived from a Welsh verb, meaning to agree, to consent.



A notable instance of descent from literary to vulgar use is to be found in the history of one of the meanings of the verb to "cut." The phrases to "cut over," and to "cut away," are found in the writers of the latter part of the sixteenth century, bearing precisely the same meaning as attaches to the corresponding modern slang expressions. For instance, Lambard the antiquary, in his "Perambulation of Kent," published in 1570, says: "Let me cut over to Watling Streete." Nashe, in one of his Marprelate tracts, the "Counter-cuffe to Martin Junior," 1589, writes: "He came latelie over-sea into Kent, from thence he cut over into Essex at Gravesende." With the present day use of these phrases is generally associated the idea of more or less hurried, or enforced departure. In "Great Expectations," Orlick remarks: "A good night for cutting off in. We'd be puzzled how to bring down a jail-bird on the wing to-night."

The expression to "knock off," meaning to desist from, to give up, is a familiar colloquialism, with a peculiarly modern appearance; but in reality it can show good authority for its existence in its use by one of the best and most vigorous of English prose writers. In the tenth chapter of the "History of the Worthies of England," 1662, Fuller writes:

"In noting of their natiivities, I have wholly observed the instructions of Pitseus, where I knock off with his death, my light ending with his life on that subject."

A frequently-heard vulgarism is "along of," in the sense of "on account of." But, vulgar as its use is now considered to be, it is a genuine, good old English phrase, that was in frequent literary use for centuries before, falling from its high estate, it became a familiar locution in the vocabulary of the street. It is found so far back as the ninth century in King Alfred's translation of Orosius's "History," and is in fact common in most of the early writers. It occurs in Chaucer and in Caxton. William Stafford, in his "Examination of Complaints," published in 1581, speaking of the general poverty, says: "Whereof it is longe I cannot well tell." In the first part of King Henry the Sixth, Act iv., scene 3, the Duke of York exclaims:

We mourn, France smiles; we lose, they daily get;  
All long of this vile traitor Somerset.

Cymbeline, when telling his daughter Imogen of her mother's death, says:

And long of her it was  
That we meet here so strangely.

Another street word of respectable descent, is "fadge," to suit, or fit. Its use is now pretty well confined to costermongers and similar street folk; but it is to be found in Shakespeare, and in other Elizabethan and Jacobean writers. "How will this fadge?" asks Viola in Twelfth Night. "Clothes I must get; this fashion will not fadge with me," says a character in Beaumont and Fletcher's Wit without Money.

A word that might have served a very useful purpose in our language is "proser." We have no equivalent in English for the French "prosateur," a word that Menage invented in imitation of the Italian "prosatore," a writer in prose. "Proser" was coined to meet the want, and is to be found in this sense in Drayton. But the word has degenerated, and is now so universally used and accepted as a mere synonym for a bore, or a dull talker or writer, that it would be a hopeless task to try to employ it in any higher or broader sense, and, for the present at least, we must be content with the rather ugly compound "prose-writer."

The phrase to "make bones of," that is, to find difficulty in anything, is now restricted to colloquial use; but it was formerly current literary coin, and is frequently to be met with in our older literature. Its earlier form was, "to find bones in," which clearly shows the phrase to have originated in a reference to bones in soup, or similar food, regarded as obstacles to swallowing. In this form it is found as early as the middle of the fifteenth century, in the Paston Letters. It does not occur in its present shape "to make bones" until a century later, but from this period on to the end of the seventeenth century it was in constant use. Two early instances may suffice. Nashe, in his before-mentioned "Have with you to Saffron Walden," speaking of Harvey, says: "He would make no bones to take the wall of Sir Philip Sidney." In Robert Greene's "Francesco's Fortune," 1590, a timid lover is thus encouraged: "Tricke thy selfe up in thy best reparaill, and make no bones at it, but on a wooing." "Gills," a slang term for the lower part of the face, was used with much the same meaning by Ben Jonson, and by Lord Bacon. To "swop," that is to exchange or barter, is now an undeniably vulgar word, but it appears in the classic pages of the "Spectator," and is also to be found much earlier in Robert Greene's volumi

nous writings. "Tall," in the American sense of vain or braggart, is only a modification of the former generally accepted meaning of brave or bold. Dekker, in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, 1600, Act i., says: "Hee's a brother of our trade, a good workman, and a tall souldier."

But the list might be extended almost indefinitely, for the words and phrases given above are but examples of a very large class. The fate of many words, as of some books, seems to have been controlled by

That shrewd and knavish sprite  
Call'd Robin Goodfellow,

or some other irresponsible elf. Good and useful words die from neglect and disuse, while inferior coinages enjoy a vigorous existence. Some words, originally slang and of doubtful origin, receive promotion and become integral parts of our recognised vocabulary; but others, such as those which form the subject of this paper, although still current, are yet but debased images of their former selves.

## THE UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE OF SIMEON PRECIOUS.

### CHAPTER I.

DOCTOR PRECIOUS—Simeon Precious, M.D.—was Demonstrator of Anatomy in the University of—. He was a tall, lank man of fifty-five years of age, clean-shaven, and of cadaverous complexion; while the falling away of his dark hair from his brow and temples had had the effect of still further accentuating the general asceticism of his appearance. Of a somewhat feeble physique from his childhood, much study and continual mental exercise had served to increase the initial disproportion between the energy of his mind and the frailty of his body, and to render the latter, as time went on, more and more incompetent to restrain the impulses and vagaries of the former, and less capable of remaining stolid and unmoved when exposed to its surging eddies and wild commotions.

He had no practice in the ordinary sense of the word, but devoted the whole of his time to lecturing, and tuition, and private research; though, when the local hospital happened to contain a patient suffering from some mysterious and perplexing disease, he was frequently to be seen there, making close and prolonged examinations, and suggesting new and

strange methods of treatment, which were oftentimes startling in their novelty and boldness. But it was not the diseased man who absorbed his attention and excited his sympathy; it was the disease itself in which all his interest centred, and it was less to save life or banish pain that he schemed and operated, than to bring back into proper working order the deranged mechanism of the sufferer's system.

That life was saved and pain banished as a consequence of his delicate and skilful manipulations was a matter of comparative indifference to Doctor Precious; and when the patient's body was once more in a normal condition, all his interest in him ceased. He pondered much over problems which are generally considered to be so incapable of solution as to make the serious contemplation of them nothing more than waste of time. But the search for the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life—futile as it has always proved—has been the means of discovering many valuable and interesting facts in chemical science, and perhaps Doctor Precious found a similarly sufficient reward result from his prolonged courses of experiments and investigations.

He was chary of making confidences, and spoke but little of the strange and mysterious problems which it was known were engaging his earnest attention. It was said that, amongst other seemingly wild dreams, he confidently cherished the hope of being able to add a third or more to the actual duration of a man's life, and, consequently, to his opportunities for study and research, by discovering a means of making sleep unnecessary. He argued, so those who were most intimate with him said, that a man grew tired and sleepy through some change in the condition of his system, or of some part of it, the blood most probably; and that Nature, by some unknown process, transformed, during the six or eight hours of nightly sleep, the condition which produced a feeling of drowsiness and weariness into the condition which made a man feel wakeful and fresh. Other effects which Nature but very slowly brought to pass, science had discovered ways of bringing about in a very short time; and Doctor Precious declared that he could not consider he was entertaining an altogether extravagant or idle hope in looking forward to a day when science, by injecting some strongly oxygenated liquid into the blood, or by some other means, should find out a way of effecting this as yet

mysterious and occult transformation of the condition of the human system in as many minutes, or fewer, as unassisted Nature took hours.

For years past, too, he had devoted much time and untiring labour to a series of experiments and observations by means of which he hoped to cast some light upon the mysterious connection between mind and body. How could two things (if "things" were, indeed, a right word to use) so different in nature affect each other? This was the question to which he was striving to find an answer. He had studied deeply the theories of Leibnitz and Spinoza, but he could not yet see his way clearly to accept them. At the same time, however, he had no theory of his own which would give a satisfactory answer to the question which was constantly tormenting him, and driving him on to fresh experiments and investigations. To say, as Leibnitz says, that when a man moves his finger coincidentally with the desire to move it, it is a delusion to suppose that there is any connection between the desire and the act, seemed to him to be contrary to all experience; and yet how could mind, intangible, invisible, imponderous mind, act upon solid, ponderous matter? So year after year he strained and strove after the mysterious secret which ever eluded his grasp.

When not engaged in lecturing or other official work, the Demonstrator of Anatomy lived a hermit-like life in a couple of uncomfortable rooms in one of the quietest streets of the town. He seldom or never dined in the hall of his college, and he was not much troubled with invitations to dine elsewhere. He himself had never been known to ask any one to share a meal with him in his own rooms; and if such an invitation had ever been given, some excuse would probably have been invented for declining it, unless curiosity had mastered the not unnatural unwillingness to make a table-companion of a man who seemed to look upon his fellow-creatures merely as potential "niduses" for the incubation and development of monstrous growths, or as subjects for courses of mystic experiments.

There were few, if any, who could be called his friends, for he gave but slight encouragement to those whom interest in the same studies brought into association with him to cultivate a closer intimacy. Without being morose or misanthropic, his manner seemed distinctly to proclaim

that a healthy, living man, who afforded him opportunities neither for dissection nor delicate operation, was devoid of all interest and attraction for him. To the young men who attended his lectures and demonstrations, he was more a speaking automaton than a man of like nature with themselves. There was no sympathy, no feeling of a common humanity between them; and the Demonstrator's pupils would as soon have thought of looking upon one of the antique statues in the University Museum in the light of a possible friend, as upon himself.

Of Simeon Precious, indeed, it could be truly said that, though he was in the world, he was not of it. Its pleasures, and gaieties, and beauties were utterly without charm or interest to him; and a "yellow primrose by the water's brim" was not even a yellow primrose to him, nor even "a perennial acaulescent herb;" it was simply nothing at all. Anything that was simple, and natural, and wholesome, might just as well have not existed, for all he cared about it, except inasmuch as it provided him with food, and consequently supported his vitality, and so enabled him to continue the researches and investigations for which alone he seemed to live.

Notwithstanding his apparently frail physique, he had never been compelled by ill-health or bodily weakness to desist from his work or studies even for a single day. There was something about his whole appearance, indeed, which seemed to suggest that his body was scarcely like the bodies of other men; but that it was a mere cloak or covering for his mind, helplessly swayed and tossed about by the impulses and vagaries of the wild spirit it veiled, rather than a solid working machine. His acquaintances shook their heads gravely now and then as they glanced at him, and prophesied some terrible break-down in the near future.

#### CHAPTER II.

THE Demonstrator of Anatomy had been working hard and late for several days past, hard and late even for him. He was thrilled with a feverish hope that his experiments and investigations had at last disclosed to him the elements of the solution of the mysterious problem which had so long been baffling him, the action of mind upon matter, if only he could understand their full bearing upon each other, and combine them in the right way. But everything was still very misty and

indeterminate, and the Demonstrator felt painfully conscious that his hopes were born rather of a kind of hazy intuition than of an actual comprehension of clear facts. Still he worked on, now experimenting, now rapt in deepest thought.

For several nights past his enthusiastic ardour had kept him up long after the time when he usually went to bed, and his hours of sleep, which were never more than were barely necessary, had been seriously curtailed. To-night he worked on till his brain grew quite confused and heavy. Strange and almost indescribable thrills shot through it, as though little bubbles were bursting, or tiny bomb-shells were exploding inside it. He was not unfamiliar with these sensations, and he knew that he had worked too long, and that for an hour at least after he had laid his weary body down in his bed, he would feel those startling thrills and explosions in his over-worked brain, and that for so long, or even longer, sleep would refuse to visit him and grant him the soothing restfulness of perfect unconsciousness.

Feeling utterly tired out, he crossed the landing and entered his little bedroom. He began to undress, but, as he did so, he could not keep his mind from dwelling on the visionary discoveries of the last day or two. Suddenly a fresh ray of light seemed to gleam upon him, and he thought that he could see his way to unravel at least one perplexing knot. Fearful lest the happy inspiration should vanish and be forgotten before morning, he seized a piece of paper, and sat down at a little table to make a note. But what had seemed so clear a moment or two ago, was now all hazy and indistinct. The Demonstrator racked his brain in his endeavours to bring back his former train of thought, in which he fancied he had seen a certain series of facts manifestly pointing to a most important and interesting conclusion; but it was all in vain. He could not now recall what for a moment had seemed so clear. Suddenly, as he sat rapt in deep and striving thought, one of those horridly-whirring bomb-shells seemed to explode in his brain with greater violence than he had ever known before, and a moment afterwards the Demonstrator fell on to the floor in a state of utter unconsciousness.

### CHAPTER III.

It was one of the mornings when the Demonstrator of Anatomy was announced

to lecture. All through the night he had lain on the floor just as he had fallen; and it was broad daylight when he awoke from the sleep into which, without any interval of wakefulness, his state of unconsciousness had merged.

He tried to open his eyes, or rather he was conscious of wanting to open them; but he not only found that he was quite without power to raise the lids, but he felt strangely incapable of even actively trying to do so. The will to raise them was there, but all energy or power to attempt to carry out that will was wanting. His whole body seemed rigidly paralysed. As he lay on the floor, the events of the previous evening came back clearly to his recollection, and he remembered everything that had occurred up to the moment when he had fallen. It was his morning to lecture, he knew; and, wondering what the time might be, he felt a desire to look at his watch, but his hand refused to carry out the will of his mind, and remained fixed and immovable by his side.

"What can have gone wrong with me?" he pondered. "My mind is perfectly clear, and I have no pain; yet I can't move even the smallest muscle, and I don't feel able even to try to move one. Can I speak, I wonder?" and at the same time he willed to utter the words of his thought, but his lips remained still, and no sound issued from them.

Then his eyes suddenly opened automatically, without the slightest attempt on his own part to raise the lids.

"This is really very extraordinary!" he thought; and already he began to feel more of a professional than of a merely personal interest in his own case. "I never knew anything like this before. I wonder if I can close my eyes again!"

But he only experienced the same strange incapacity as he had been conscious of previously. He could not even try to close his eyes; he could only inertly will to do so, while the perverse pupils remained staring widely open.

In just the same peculiar automatic manner as his eyes had opened a few moments previously, his right hand now mechanically sought his waistcoat-pocket, drew out the watch, and held it up before his eyes for a moment, and then placed it back in the pocket again.

Doctor Precious was too much astonished to note the time; and as he lay quite non-plussed and baffled by the extraordinary behaviour of his body, he was more startled



than ever at feeling his lips begin to move, and hearing himself exclaim :

"Can I speak, I wonder?"

"Good Heavens!" he thought — he would have uttered the words aloud if he had been able—as a sudden idea flashed through his mind, "is it possible that there can be anything in that theory of Leibnitz's after all, and that there is a double mechanism, and that my two machines have got out of synchronism?"

His eyes now closed as suddenly and as automatically as they had previously opened.

"It must be so! I did want to shut my eyes just after I tried to find out whether I could speak."

Now, as the theory of Leibnitz's of which Doctor Precious was thinking may not have come within the compass of the studies of all the readers of this narrative, it may be as well to say a word or two in explanation of it. It is, by the way, borrowed chiefly, if not altogether, from Spinoza.

"Man," says Leibnitz, "is composed of mind and body; but what is mind and what is body, and what is the nature of their union? Substances so opposite in kind cannot affect one another; mind cannot act upon matter, or matter upon mind; and the appearance of their reciprocal operation is an appearance only, and a delusion."

That is to say, that when we move a finger or a foot coincidently with our will to do so, we are under a delusion if we suppose that there is any connection between the will and the deed. Now, as most people had got into the habit of thinking that there was even something more than a mere connection between the two, and that the latter was entirely dependent upon the former, Leibnitz was conscious that their conversion to a more correct way of thinking would not be brought about by merely telling them that they were under a delusion; and so he offered them, in the place of their old erroneous opinions, a theory which he assured them afforded the true and scientific explanation of the apparent connection between will and act, or mind and body. He compared man with a sort of double clock, wound up and regulated so that the two sections of it should always keep exact time together. Such a double mechanism, he declared, was man, and he had been so constructed that when the machinery regulating his desires

made him feel the wish to stretch out his arm, at that precise moment the machinery regulating his actions thrust the limb forward. This is the theory, which is known as Leibnitz's "Harmonie Préétablie," and it was this theory which Doctor Precious—who had never believed in it before—was now beginning to suspect might be true.

"Well, I can soon settle that point now," thought the Demonstrator. "I want to get up and go to that chair by the table and sit down in it. Now, if Leibnitz is right, my body ought presently to carry out the will of my mind."

For a little while Doctor Precious's body lay perfectly motionless on the floor; then, after an interval of similar duration to those which had already separated his acts of volition from the execution of them, it rose in a perfectly natural and easy manner from the floor and seated itself in the chair.

"Wonderful!" thought the Demonstrator, quite delighted at the amazing and unprecedented experience which was falling to his lot, and quite forgetful of the inconveniences which must necessarily attend such a condition as his when he came to go about in the world again.

"Now the next thing I must find out is the amount of time by which the two mechanisms are out of synchronism; and I must get at my watch to do that. I wish to take it out of my pocket, detach the chain from my waistcoat, and then place both watch and chain on the table here just under my eyes."

Again he remained quite motionless for a time, and then his fingers carried out the plan his mind had formulated, and the watch and chain lay on the table before him.

It was half-past seven o'clock.

"Now," reflected the Demonstrator, "I must will to do something, and then see how long a time elapses before I actually do it. I wish to touch the swivel of my chain with the forefinger of my right hand."

Doctor Precious's eyes were all this time fixed rigidly on his watch, for he could no more change their direction, without giving due notice of his intention to do so, than he could get up from his chair and walk across the room. Exactly two minutes after framing the wish, his finger laid itself on the swivel and remained fixed there.

"Two minutes! That means, then, that whatever I want to do I shall only be able

to do two minutes after I have formulated the wish or felt the impulse to do it. I'm very much afraid that this will be somewhat inconvenient when I am operating. However, I hope that this abnormal derangement of the twin mechanisms won't last very long. I will take a strong opiate to-night, and try if that will put mind and body back into correct synchronism again. Here's this tiresome finger sticking fast to the swivel just because I forgot to wish that it should resume its former position after just touching it. I must be more careful in the future and think a little longer ahead."

Presently the finger left the swivel, and resumed its former position, and Doctor Precious noted that the interval between volition and act was again exactly two minutes.

"Now," reflected the Demonstrator, "I must make my plans for the day very carefully. If I can manage to get on all right till to-night, I hope that I shall be able to restore mind and body to simultaneous action by to-morrow. What a delightful case it would be, if only it were somebody else's! I wish I hadn't got that lecture this morning. Shall I send a notice that I cannot come to-day? No, I've never missed one yet, and I'll contrive to get through it somehow. Fortunately, I'm not on very familiar terms with my class, so there's not likely to be anything said or done that I can't easily prepare myself for. I must think the whole business well out, and keep my volition a good two minutes ahead of the time for acting. I have more than two hours yet in which to settle all my plans. But I must be careful that I don't think my programme out too intensely, and that my thoughts don't become wishes, or I shall be going through the whole lecture prematurely. I really think that when I have given my lecture I will return here at once, and take that opiate, and give directions that I am not to be disturbed till to-morrow morning. Now I must think about having a wash and a brush, and then about getting some breakfast."

The Demonstrator found no great difficulty in making his toilet, for he had been accustomed to thinking out small details, and so he accurately rehearsed in his mind all the separate little acts which go to make up the several necessary operations.

The question of breakfast had next to be considered. Doctor Precious felt nervously anxious to prevent his strange condition

from becoming known to others, and he had now to leave the solitude of his bedroom and face the world, though for the present that would be represented only by his landlady's maid-of-all-work. The Demonstrator always prepared his own coffee, and all that the girl had to do was to bring up his two rashers of bacon when she heard him ring his bell. Doctor Precious now willed to leave his bedroom and go up to the bell-rope in the room where his breakfast was laid. In a couple of minutes his legs began to move, and quickly brought him into smart collision with the door. He had unfortunately forgotten to wish to open it. This was careless, and not like him. The consequences were painful, and the Demonstrator of Anatomy would have appeared in a very ridiculous light if there had been anybody there to see him. His forehead bumped heavily against the upper part of the door, and remained in close contact with it as though it had stuck there, while his feet kicked the lower part of it several times in their attempts to make further progress. Then they ceased to move, and Doctor Precious seemed to be adhering to the door like a limpet to a rock. This little accident considerably disconcerted him, and he remained closely pressed against the door for some moments before venturing to wish to make any further movement. He saw the necessity of the most careful forethought and consideration before committing himself to a definite act of volition, and he was determined to avoid any more such awkward mistakes as this in the future.

Thinking out beforehand every little detail, he now succeeded in reaching the bell-rope without further accident. Then, before formulating the wish to pull it, he stood thinking for a moment or two, planning a series of little acts which should enable him to preserve a natural appearance during the minute or so that the servant would be in the room. He never spoke to her unless he had some order to give her, and the thought of his taciturn and reserved habits once more afforded him satisfaction.

When the girl came up into the room with the Demonstrator's dish of bacon, she found Doctor Precious sitting at a little table in front of the window with his back turned towards her. He was bending over a book, and seemed to be reading it intently. But it was only the words immediately under his eyes that he could see, for his pupils remained rigidly fixed,

and could not be made to move without the inevitable two minutes' notice. The girl put down the bacon, said "Your breakfast is ready, sir," and then left the room. Doctor Precious gave a mental sigh of relief.

It was a difficult task that he had now before him. How could he possibly calculate beforehand the exact amount of mastication that each mouthful of his bread and bacon would require? He sat thinking over this awkward problem for some time after he had succeeded in making his coffee. He knew quite well that his jaws would work up and down only just so many times as he willed they should do two minutes previously, and that if he miscalculated the amount of mastication that would be necessary, he would either be left with his mouth half-full for a couple of minutes till he could persuade his refractory mechanism to begin to work again, or his jaws would go on rising and falling in a ridiculous and uncomfortable fashion when there was nothing left for them to chew.

To describe that probably unparalleled breakfast in detail would weary the reader as much as the actual experience and enduring of it wearied Simeon Precious. After struggling resolutely on for some time against the difficulties of the task, his throat now making convulsive attempts to swallow when there was nothing for it to swallow, and now remaining obstinately sullen and rigid when his mouth was full of hot coffee or bacon, the disheartened Demonstrator at last ceased from further attempts in disgust, and left half his breakfast unconsumed.

His recent experience had considerably lessened his confidence in himself, and Doctor Precious now felt painfully troubled at the thought of lecturing. He comforted himself, however, with the reflection that he could rehearse beforehand exactly what he was going to say; and he resolved to do so at least twice, a plan which he thought would not only prevent awkward mishaps, but would, if the rehearsals were successful, greatly serve to restore his confidence in himself, and this, he felt, would be half the battle. He would cut the lecture very short, he said to himself, and would get back to his rooms again with as little delay as possible. Fortunately, he need perform nothing in the way of demonstration or operation; he had nothing to do but to talk. He noted down, after due notice to his fingers, an outline of what he

intended to say, and then commenced to mentally fill in the details. When he had fully thought out the whole of his lecture, he placed his written notes in front of him, and then formulated the wish to utter the lecture aloud. After a lapse of two minutes, and when he had already mentally rehearsed several sentences of it, his lips began to move and gave utterance to the first sentence. So it was until the Demonstrator had finished his discourse; his mind was always several sentences in advance of his lips. This, however, caused him no serious trouble, for his lips moved quite automatically, and the mechanical uttering of the words in no way interfered with the definite formulating of his thoughts. He was getting, too, a little more accustomed to the anomalous derangement of the twin mechanisms that respectively regulated his volition and action, and he felt renewed confidence in his ability to get through his morning's duty without any one discovering that there was anything wrong with him. Then he would at once return to his rooms, and keep his secret till the next morning, at any rate, by which time he hoped that he would be able to bring mind and body back into exact synchronism again.

Doctor Precious now rehearsed the whole of his lecture for a second time. He got through it without any hitch, and felt quite prepared for his coming ordeal when he would have to deliver it before his class. He sat thinking for some time as to the best way of getting to the lecture-room. At first he thought of taking a cab, but then he reflected that he could not exactly forecast the time of his arrival, and that, in default of the necessary two minutes' notice, troublesome difficulties might arise about getting out and paying his fare. He settled that he would walk as usual. He carefully planned his route, and then set out, keeping his eyes bent down, as he passed along the streets, to avoid as far as possible the glance of any one he knew.

To walk along even the quieter streets of a quiet town was not a task to be lightly undertaken by one in Doctor Precious's strange condition. When once he had formulated his wishes and his limbs had begun to carry them out, he could not turn aside or stop. Not the slightest deviation from the previously-settled plan was possible without a two minutes' notice to his body. The Demonstrator was painfully conscious of this, and he adopted a

very slow pace in order to lessen the chances of collision. He was terribly afraid lest any one should want to stop him for a few moments' conversation, for he knew that he could neither stay his steps nor speak a single word without the inevitable interval between volition and deed. His unsocial and reserved habits, however, again stood him in good stead, and he reached the lecture-room without meeting any one who cared to greet him or have a moment's chat with him. He had made a point of getting there very early, before any of his class should have arrived. He wanted to have a few minutes alone in which he might privately prepare himself for the coming ordeal, and wind up, as it were, his vocal machinery. He took his seat at his desk, and bent his head over his notes in an attitude of deep study. He wished to appear as absorbed as possible, in order to preserve himself from all chance greetings or remarks. He was beginning to feel painfully troubled and nervous again, and he regretted that he had not yielded to his first impulse and postponed the lecture. It was too late to do so now. At any rate the Demonstrator felt too much unstrung and too distrustful of himself to dare to deviate from the plans which he had laid down. It would be better, he felt, to make the effort to deliver the lecture than to run the risk which would come of making excuses and entering into fictitious explanations without having time to maturely think them over and carefully formulate them.

Presently the Demonstrator's class began to assemble. Doctor Precious was feeling terribly troubled. As soon as he heard the preliminary whir-r-r, which notified the near approach of the striking of the hour, he wished to raise his head and commence his lecture.

Soon after the hour had struck, the Demonstrator's head sprang up with the jerky movement of a mechanical wax-figure, and his lips began to work. He gabbled through his lecture without the slightest inflection of tone and without the least motion of hand or head. Then he stopped and drooped his head again with the same jerky movement with which

he had raised it to commence his lecture. Now that the dreaded ordeal was well over, Doctor Precious felt even more confused and troubled than he had done while it had yet to be gone through. His mind seemed to be growing clogged and to be getting beyond his control. He sat perfectly motionless till his class left the lecture-hall, and then by a violent effort of will he formulated the wish to return to his rooms. His body reluctantly obeyed his commands, and, as the Demonstrator gradually neared his lodgings, he grew more and more afraid that he would never reach them, and that before he could do so his mind would cease to have any influence or power of control over his body.

Summoning up all the little will-force that was left to him, he at last succeeded in arriving at his rooms with a swimming brain and a reeling frame. He had just sufficient power of volition and strength of body left to enable him to open the door of his bedroom; but he had scarcely entered the little room when he fell heavily on to the floor just where he had fallen on the previous night.

It was a fortnight later when Doctor Precious again recovered consciousness. He awoke to find himself in bed under the supervision of a nurse from the hospital. When he was allowed to talk, he learned that, a couple of weeks previously, he had been found lying insensible on the floor of his bedroom, and that he was now just recovering from a sharp attack of brain-fever. To his intense, though unexpressed satisfaction, he found that his mind and body were in exact synchronism again. Partly owing to the time which had elapsed since the commencement of his fever, and partly owing to the unwillingness he felt to institute enquiries which might perhaps lead to making a matter of public knowledge and gossip that which he hoped he had been able to conceal from every one but himself, he was never quite able to thoroughly satisfy himself whether the events of that strange morning were actual facts, or merely the wild dreamings of his fever-racked brain.



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